

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

## Ervin, Trachtenberg spar over 'berating' IG

### At issue was Tuition Assistance Program report

County News | Erin Cunningham

Montgomery County Council Vice President Valerie Ervin accused Councilwoman Duchy Trachtenberg of purposefully "berating" the county's inspector general in a public setting.

Ervin's comments came after a council committee meeting Thursday in which Trachtenberg questioned findings in Inspector General Thomas Daley's report on the county's Tuition Assistance Program.

At issue was whether the county's ethics law had been violated. Some council members, including Trachtenberg (D-At large) of North Bethesda, said Dagley's report implied it had been.

"Today I certainly made no personal effort to indict the inspector general, but I am well within my rights to ask some very hard questions," Trachtenberg said.

Dagley said after Thursday's committee meeting that he did not intend to imply a violation in his report.

Ervin (D-Dist. 5) of Silver Spring questioned why Dagley, who was investigating wrongdoing, was the focus.

Ervin said it likely was connected to Dagley's recent accusations that County Executive Isiah Leggett's office has obstructed his investigations.

"[Trachtenberg] is clearly working on behalf of the executive branch in an orchestrated way to damage [Dagley's] reputation," Ervin said.

Trachtenberg denied the claim.

"I actually work for the million residents of Montgomery County," she said. "I think that's most unfortunate that Councilwoman Ervin takes that tone in her comments."

Growth policy discussion postponed

Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) is sharing a draft of his growth policy proposals with council members, but a county spokesman said Leggett is in no hurry to send over a final draft because the council has indicated it is in no rush to take it up.

"They've sort of said they don't want it," spokesman Patrick K. Lacefield said.

He said he is unsure when the final draft will be ready.

The council discussed the county's growth policy last year and in November asked Leggett to present an alternative plan by March 31.

The growth policy is used to govern the management of land use, development and growth.

Leggett has hired consultant Robert Winick of Gannett Fleming to study the policy, at a cost of about \$110,000.

Last year, council members questioned why Leggett's recommendations were to come after the council took up the growth policy — as it does every two years.

Now, council President Nancy M. Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park says the council will not review Leggett's proposal for a "good long time."

She said she was unsure whether the review would take place before or after the November election.

"We are consumed with the budget and our master plan work," Floreen said.

Federal health care legislation will not affect county nutrition labeling law

A law passed by the Montgomery County Council last year requiring calorie information to be posted on menus and menu boards will not be affected by an identical requirement in federal health care legislation that President Barack Obama signed into law last week.

Councilman George L. Leventhal (D-At large) of Takoma Park, who sponsored the county bill, said he purposefully drafted his legislation to mirror changes being discussed at the federal level.

The county law takes effect July 1, but the federal requirement might not be in place for several years.

The requirement will apply only to chain restaurants with 20 or more locations nationwide.

Leventhal said he chose to introduce a county bill because there was no certainty at the time that federal health care reform would pass.

"We were aware of the language in the House and Senate bills," he said. "This is the same actual language."